

THUS SPAKE VADIRAJA TIRTHA --IV

by: Shri. U.Venkatakrishna Rao, Prof: Madras -17.

Incidentally it might be noted that Saint Vadiraja got the inspiration for undertaking such a pilgrimage from the Mahabharata Tatparya Nirmya XII 278

पृथ्वीं प्रदक्षिणत एव समस्त तीर्थस्थानं यथाक्रमत एव विधाय पार्थः
संपूज्य तेषु निवृत्तिषु दृष्टिं सुभक्ता कृष्णे समर्पयितुमापुरय प्रभासम्

The Pandavas had similarly toured the earth in Pradakshina form worshipping Sri Krishna in all these pilgrim centres after Arjuna's receiving the Paashupata Astra; they were guided by the sage Lomasha. They completed the tour in Prabhasa. Vadiraja Swami also did likewise touring the country Pradakshina-wise, starting from Udupi, going northward in the first chapter; in the second, he goes northward ending with Kashi and Badari in the Himalayas; in the third, he goes east viz: Puri Jagannatha, Conjeevaram and ending with Kumbhakonam Shaamgapani. The last is the South Prabandha. The Pandavas had ended with Prabhasa to prostrate before Krishna, and our saint winds up his first chapter with the description of ^a few lakes and the Gopi Chandana found nearby. This Prabhasa in Saurashtra or Gujrat is also famous as the ancient Triveni since the three rivers Sarasvati, Hiranyaa and Kapilaa commingle their waters here, the Kapilaa washing its waters into Sarasvati, this latter flows into the ocean. It is reported that after Krishna's foot was wounded by the arrow of the hunter named Jaraa, He gave up His body at this spot, That is why the holy spot is also called Dehotsarga Teertha. Let us hear the saint's sloka;

सरस्वतीहिम्याभ्यां सङ्गे यत्रापराम्बुधेः ।
प्रभासाख्यं तदा भति प्रभाऽऽसजगत्तु यतः ॥

That holy spot where there is the commingling of the waters of the Ocean with the waters of the ^{Kapilaa} Sarasvati and Hiranyaa rivers, that spot is called Prabhaasa since the world itself derived its lustre from that spot !.

It might be noted that the first prayer in this work starts with the word Hari and the last word in the last sloka is Shriya. The Saint here implies that the two highest gods are these; here again one might note that the letter Ha of the first combined with

in the first- last refers to Haya, the horse, representing his ^{ven} tutelary deity. The saint has also followed the usual convention in temple rituals that the very last ceremonial worship is the cradling of the deity to sleep; so the 44th verse in the fourth chapter requests fittingly the deity to sleep in the cave of the devotees hear exactly as He sleeps on his couch, Adishesha serpent. The saints verse runs thus:

यथा गृहामुखेनाथ इवै इवै समापते ।
तथा हृदि गृहामध्यं अध्यासीनो रमस्व मे ॥

This naturally reminds us of the appropriate ^{भुजंगप्रयात} metre in verse 6 of this last chapter wherein the saint has worshipped the God sleeping on Adishesha in the midst of the Kaveri waters in Srirangam. How the mellifluous verse imitates the serpentine gait deserves to be noted, (the liquid letters in the first line नवं भवेत् नीलः स्फुरद्विमज्जलः स्मरन्निन्नलेखः सुरश्रेणिपालः श्रिये रंगधामास्त्वयं पुण्यनामा महेश्वर्यस्तोमा गुणस्तोमभरमा । May the God, bluish like the newly formed cloud, resplendent with clusters of bright jewels, ^{sporting} sparkling in the mind of His devotees possessing a meritorious name, Himself the very acme^{or} limit of supreme prosperity, and possessing a host of virtues, --residing in Sri Rangam, confer prosperity.

The poetic imageries reflect profundity of the worldly experience of the society at the time in which our devotee lived. A father's affection for his daughter sometimes overrides all other considerations and often he lives with the daughter, finally to reside permanently also in her husband's house even. The father Vishnu (in Verse 21 of Uttara Prabandha is so fond of his daughter Ganga that He lives with her in different forms as Narayana (in Badari), as Rama in Prayaga, ^{yaga} as Gopalakrishna in the confluence of the Alakananda with Ganga, as Hrishikesh, as Ananthashayana, in Jehnu, as Govinda in Hastinapura, as Vyasa in ^{Varanashrama,} as Hari in Haridvara, as Shveta Varaha in Sookarakshetra, as Veni^a Madhava in Prayaga, as Bindu Madh^ava in Kashi, as Udaara Madhava in the point where she washes her waters into the ocean. Not satisfied with this living with His daughter almost everywhere before she gets married, He lives with her in her husband's house, the ocean also; let us now hear the words of the poet: —

Cont:-

श्रीनारायणराम गोपतिहृषीकेशादि रूपोऽयम् Page No. 3

तां हासं हरिस्तकराकृतिरथ श्रीदेवहूत्यात्मजः
वेणोमाधव बिन्दुमाधवः तीरे व्यधत्तस्मिन्
गङ्गा किं बहुनाधुनापि कस्यति त्वत्तु गेहहृत्सो ॥

The first letter श्री here might suggest that He lives with his wife also).

Commentators refer to the way in which Vishnu resides in Ganga ^{always and everywhere}

waters -- द्रवरूपेण गङ्गां भौ मात्र संशयः ^{and also}
ममन्तः समुद्रे कवयोऽवयन्ति.

His suggestive references to गङ्गास्नान and उड्डापान (sweet water)

deserve also to be noted. The Vithala on the bank of the Tunga

river is described in ^amemorable verse (Purva 13) thus:-

मैर्यान्मातृनिबद्धचारुचरणः पापौघजोर्म हृद्यैः

वस्त्रैस्त्वं पाथि युष्मरीकमुनिना जारेति संजोषितः

उङ्गातीरगताऽसि विवृल दिङ्मन्त्राकृतिः पांथितम्
वेङ्कणो यादु मे न दास्यासि पदे त्वत्संस्थितः कथात्रे ॥

The poet imagines the deity Vithala on the Tunga bank almost as

a very close playmate whose deficiencies are easily known by him.

To avoid being made fun of as one whose legs were tied by His
mother for His theft of curds and butter, the deity seems to have

migrated slowly to the south. But the sage Bundarika detected

Him and even had the audacity to address Him as Jaara, as one who

had illicitly loved the Gopees. The poet seems to address Him

who had resorted to the river Tunga in a different form so that

here at least His antecedents might not be known, 'O Lord'

I know all these escapades of yours-- if thou dost not confer

mukti on me, I will expose your sinful past and make the place

too hot for your habitation !.

The Srinivasa deity on the Tirupati Hill is described by
the saint in a lovely manner:-

आरुढमारुढस्त्वय आकिङ्कितरमाधरम् ।

आनमज्जन सर्वस्वं आश्रये केकूटेश्वरम् ॥

The Lord has His seat on Garuda's shoulders, He is embracing

Rama (Lakshmi), and Dhara (Goddess Earth), He is the entire

wealth of His devotees, -- such a Venkateshwara I resort to'

The Hill was known as Sheshachala and the fact we are reminded
of in the next verse.

काशिकृत्य यं शोते गिरिकृत्याद्यतिष्ठति ।

अवतीर्णोऽनुजीकृत्य स तस्य सागरीः फणी ॥

The serpent shesha became, His bed; later it has converted itself

into this mountain; he had already become Rama's younger brother Lakshmana, so he is one of the greatest devotees of the Lord ! .

Ahobala Nrisimha's Mahobala or mighty strength enables us to care a tuppence for the miseries of Samasara wherein we are confronted with the wicked in the form of darkness. We might draw the readers' attention to one or two of the five verses in the context:

अहोबलमृषिहृद्य महोबलमुपाश्रिताः ।
असन्तामिसामिष्ठां गणयामो न संसृतिम् ॥
यः संभे प्रकटीवभूव स मामे संभायितेऽपि स्फुटे
भयायो भवतां निनीतगतः । छिन्नात्स मेऽमुं भवम् ।
योऽराद्धलकामध्यसौ नरहरिः मां बलिशं पातु यः
रक्षोऽक्षिप्तदसौ प्रभुः स्वलकुलं शिखेदरुक्षप्रियः ॥

The God who manifested Himself from a pillar is sincerely prayed to protect the saint himself who is himself as simple and ignorant as Prahlada ! .

,The Pushpaka Vimana takes Sri Rama back to Ayodhya from Lanka. Kalidasa describing its movement across the sky presents us with a very alliterative alliterative sloka wherein it is described as going in the path of the gods sometimes, of the birds in the next moment, of the clouds for some distance; we might say that Kalidasa's flight of imagination also moved and soared high in the poetic sky. Vadiraja is also an equally gifted poet and his imaginative mind takes us on from one poetic imagery to another.

कृत्रिमथा सचरते सुराणां कृत्रिद्विमानं पततां कृत्रिय ।
करीन्द्रचेतो विहरत्यभीक्ष्णं सृजत दिवन्मृतनकाव्यकर्म

THUS SPEAK SAINT VADIRAJA -- V

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SOME IMPORTANT MUKTI KSHETRAS

1. in Gujarat.

Saint Vadiraja describes in I 94 Matrigaya or Siddhapuri in Gujarat. This is situated on the Western Railway route Mehasana and Abu Road in the between Ahmedabad-Delhi line. The holy spot is about a mile distant from the Railway Station called Siddhapur even now. The river Sarawati flows close by and there is a small lake, only 40 square yards in area, called Bindu -- Sarovara. The Bharata Epic (Vanaparva) testifies to its ~~sancti~~ by calling it Dharmananya. The Puranas declare that the Gods and the ~~Asuras~~ Asuras churned the ocean here and Lakshmi came out of the ocean here. That is why the place is named after her as Shree Sthala also. Maharshi Kardama Prajapati practised penance here. Taking pity on his emaciated condition, Narayana, while responding to his prayer, shed a few tears; these drops (bindus) converted ~~th~~ themselves into the lake. After some time, Svayambhuva Manu came there with his daughter Devahooti and bestowed her in marriage to the sage Kardama. The Lord Narayana incarnated as his son and ~~was~~ named Kapila. The ~~19x~~ Lord then instructed His mother Devahooti as per the Bhagavata III 21 - 33 chapters. Later still Parashuram ~~offered~~ ^{offered} libations here for ridding himself of the sin of having murdered his mother. After these incidents, the place is famous as Matrigaya. The significance of the name Siddhapuri, again, is to be noted, particularly because any religious rite performed with sincere devotion, brings success to the doer immediately. Let us hear the Saint's words.

भाति सिद्धपुरी यत्र सिद्धा मुक्तिपुरी नृणाम् ।
कुप्यं बिन्दुसरो यत्र बिन्दुमात्रं सरस्वसम् ॥

Just as even a small motety of an action sincerely performed here confers siddhi or success to the doer, so even the drop of tear converts itself into a lake, so efficacious are the religious

Cont:

rites performed here.

2. The river Godavari described in II 9-11 This river takes its rise in Mount Tryambaka, 47 miles from Nasik Road in the Bombay Delhi line. Flowing for nearly 900 miles, it reaches the Sea near Rajamuhendri. The skanda Purana tells us lovely story about the origin of this river. A famine devastated the area for 12 years and many sages resorted to Gautama for succour as in his Ashrama alone rains ^{showered} ~~showered~~ regularly and grains were growing plentifully. The sages were sumptuously fed by Gautama in his Ashrma, even after the famine had abated, particularly as the host would not permit them to depart. In the meanwhile, Gauri, actuated by feelings jealousy towards her cowife Ganga who had comfortably ensconced herself on Siva's head, asked her son Ganesha to see that Ganga would somehow be persuaded to go away, obeying his mother Ganesha diplomatically disguised himself and advised the sages to resort to ^a trick. The sages could create a cow and allow it to graze in the fields of Gautama, who would try to drive away the cow. Gautama's attempt to drive it would kill the cow and the sages could easily depart, saying that they could not partake of the hospitality of a person tainted with the sin of killing a cow. The sages did as instructed and went away, leaving Gautama perplexed as to how the cow could have been killed. Through his ^{instinct} ~~intuition~~ the sage ^a ~~re~~ ^{Tricked} ~~lised~~ that he had been ~~tricked~~ and cursed them saying that these sages should be divested of their knowledge. Gautama mediated upon Parameshwara and Ganga for long time and prayed to them that he might be rid of this Gohatya. The river Ganga accordingly came down and began to flow in the Ashrama premises. The cow was revived and the river received the name Godavari in consequence of this episode. Our saint narrates this story in verse 9 of the second Uttara Prabandha. The next two verses which also deal with this episode deserve to be ~~qu~~ quoted:

अंहासि हंसि सततं कित राखि पुष्पम्
सिंहास्थिते सुरगुरौ न तदुच्छ याचे ।

गौदे समस्तफलदे दिवा कृष्णपादे

शक्तिं विराजिमितरत्र परत्र मुक्तिम् ॥

असौ धवळबागस्य गंगादेराभिधाने

पश्चात् कुडालवर्तिका गोदासोद्गात्र सः सदा ॥

Cont:-

The sparkling alliteration deserves to be appreciated. The verses might be rendered thus; O river you dispel sins always and confer merit when Brihaspati is in the Simharaashi (The Swamiji's knowledge of astronomy can be noted here), but O Mother I do not pray for that; O gods who grants all desires, ^{show} ~~show~~ me the way to the feet of Lord Krishna, leading me ~~don't~~ ^{show} Bhakti and Virakti (renunciation of attachment), in the things of the ~~xx~~ world and in the hereafter ^{show} ~~show~~ me the way to Mukti. This river was called ~~Thavala~~ (white) Ganga in the beginning, in the middle (atmospherical region), it was known as Ganga dvara, now (on the ~~xx~~ earth), she is entitled Kushaavarta, let such a Godavari river confer pleasure always:

The saint's mortal remains and the Trivikrama image brought from Ganga are installed in Sodekshetra in the North -- Kanara District of the Mysore State (described in Verses 75 and 76 of the first chapter here). Every year, the sacred day on which the Swamiji disappeared from our view, i.e., ^{the purnya tithi} ~~this~~ of this savant is celebrated as a big festival on the ~~third~~ day in the ~~Mark~~ half of the Phalguna month and thousands of pilgrims congregate there at the time to worship at the Vrindavana of the Saint. All possible arrangements for the stay of the pilgrims are made by the Matha itself, which has now come to be known ~~of~~ after this sacred place and more popularly as Vadiraja Matha after this holy saint. So many of the pilgrims have been cured of their disease, and have had their desired fulfilled.

THUS SPAKE SAINT VADIRAJA -- VI

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THE MORAL OF THE WORKS OF SRI VADIRAJA TIRTHA

The upanishads employ a symbolic language, they do not employ a straightforward style, the brihaat aranyaka Upanishad describes in a telling metaphorical way:-

हिरण्यमेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापि द्रुतं मुखम् ।
तत्त्वं वक्षन्पात्रं सत्यदर्शने दृष्टये ॥

That the mouth of truth is covered with a folded lid and the Sun is therefore requested to open the covering lid so that we might be enabled to glimpse the true Path for us to follow. Such a person gifted with glimpse of the true path is called

Dheera in the Katha Upanishad Verse: II, 1.

परं हि विदमि व्यतृणत्स्वयं भूः तस्मात्परां पश्यति नांतरत्निनम् ।
कश्चिद्वीरः प्रत्यगात्मन मे क्विन् आवृत्तचक्षुरमृतवन्निश्चिन् ॥

This means that our limbs have only an outward vision, that is why they cannot see inward. It is only a very ^{bold} man, a dheera, who

who directs them inward and sees the Paramatma or God enshrined in our hearts. We can ^{boldly} declare that the saint Vadiraja was one such gifted genius, who turned his gaze inward. In a significant verse

extolling Bhima in his Madhvashtaka, the Saint declares that the purport of Madhava's teachings is the conquering of the six vices enshrined in our hearts, Kama or Lust, Krodha or anger, Lobha or greed, Moha or delusion, Maya or lightness, and Matsarya or jealousy. These are inborn in us and must be curbed, so that our heart could be temple wherein the Lord could be easily installed.

कामो मेन स कीचको विनिहतः, क्रोधी च दुःशासनः
कुब्धः स ध्वंसति स्सुयोधनश्च साणिमान् मोहः, विकारव्यो मदः ।
कृष्णोर्वीनिहतश्च मागधपतिः, वद्वैरिवर्गात्सदा
स तं भीम मदाभिराम

Bhima is entrusted significantly with a mace so that he might smash these six enemies which have gained an entrance into our body (it is these six enemies, Duryodhana symbolising

Lobha, Keechaka representing Kama, Dushshasana being Krodha,

Cont:-

Moha typifying Manimaan, Mada shaping itself as Baka, and Maaradha or Jarasandha symbolising jealousy that are killed by Bhima).

The Bharata Epic is thus interpreted as symbolic by the Saint, following the method of the Taatparaya Nirnaya, of the Sri Madhvacharya. Throughout his works, and particularly in the Teerthaprabhanda, the Saint's vision is not confined to the image of the deity; but it goes to the Antaryamee, the divinity enshrined inside the wooden or golden image visible to the eye. This the Saint enables us to understand even in the 14th verse of the first Prabhanda where he speaks of the ocean of Grace inside the stone-linga of Siva ~~इव नर्यामिताम्~~ to use the poet's own words.

This symbolisation is explained by the poet himself in UTTARA Prabhanda 31 while describing Mathura city, the efficacy of which holy kshetra is described in Padma, Varaha, Narada, Vishnu, Mahabharata (Vana Parva) and elsewhere. The verse deserves to be quoted fully:-

सेनायत्र विनक्तवैष्णवजना नामायुधं श्रीपतेः
सामायैः सहितः कलिः क्लृप्त रिपुर्वेत्तान्वहं हन्यते ।
प्राकारदि यत्र तीर्थनिकरः कर्मापि वर्म प्रभोः
दद्यान्सा मधुरापुरी शुभकरी श्रेयोसि भूयांसि नः ॥

Let that/auspicious city of Mathura confer many merits unto us, the city where in the army is manned by Vaishnavas, the weapons are the names of the Lord of Sree, the enemy is Kali Age aided by lust (six enemies) and killed every day, the group of holy Teerthas form the rampart wall, and the iron armour is the holy worship of God. The Bhagavata XI VI 46 summarises the saint's advice :-

नमो यो यो मुक्तस्तु गन्धर्वलोऽहं कुर्यात्तु नमः ॥
उज्जिष्ठ भोजिनो दासास्तव मां जयेमहि ॥

It is quite in the fitness of things that Bhaavi Sameera as Saint Vadiraja is entitled, he should have commented on Sri Madhva's Taatparaya Nirnaya also. His two famous works Sarasa Bharata Vilas and commentary on Taatparaya Nirnaya have earned for him the title of Anu Taatparaya Nirnaya Acharya. The first work Sarasa Bharate Vilas confittingly be described as Anu

Cont:-

Summaries

Taatparya Nirnaya. This Gita. The saint's devotion to Sri Krishna in spite of his advanced age and blindness is explicit in the verse in Krishna Stuti. (the granting of spiritual eye is also prayed for) यदि दिशसि नयनपटुतां

As a blind man, the saint plaintively pleads, I cannot worship thee, Sri Krishna. The sarasa Bharati Vilas first Vilasa-- it ~~even~~ contains 12 such vilasas or chapters -- is dedicated to the horse-faced deity Hayagreeva, towards whom also his devotion is incereely dedicated. His prayer to that God in I 24 in that work deserves to be recited by us at the commencement of every work: मुद्रापुस्तकशंखाक्षवियोति त कराम्बुज ।
हृद्यवेष हृयग्रीव मध्वानविषयो भव ॥

The ~~like~~ 4 hands of this deity are decorated by His Mudra, Pustaka, Shankha and holy beads. The entire first vilas which is dedicated to this deity should be sincerely read by us after our daily ~~the~~ pooja so that we can bloom into scholars. This Satshaastrodita Vartma, the path indicated in Madhvas Shastra is also extolled in the begining of his Rukmineesha Vijaya सञ्जास्तोदितवर्त्मना पदमिदं ध्यायन्मदं काङ्क्षिते
मन्त्रं जपेद्वास्तु संपदमयो दास्यामि भाग्यैः सह ।
तत्त्वान्यपि बोधयामि तदनु मयं चिर्भवेदित्या-
लोषयतीव यः करचरैः तं वाजिवक्त्रं भजे ॥

The ~~fixer~~ difference from other Kavyas of other poets is to be particularly noted here. If you read ~~by~~ my Kavya Rukmineesha Vijaya which illuminates the SatShasstra or righteous path, you will be able to enjoy both worldly and spiritual bliss, here and now and thereafter in the other world also. My Kavya also empounds spiritual Tattvas or religious Vedantic principles also.

After this rather superficial summary of the Teertha Prabhandha, we propose to study the Rukmineesha Vijaya, the Mahakavya in 19 cantos by our Saint Vadiraja.